

## **Testimony for the Appropriations Committee**

**February 24, 2022**

My name is Susan Mulvaney and I am from Ridgefield. I am testifying on the Governor's proposed budget H.B. No. 5037 (COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023 that unfortunately does not include critical funding for our safety net providers and their employees.

After decades of underfunding, Connecticut's direct support providers are in crisis mode because the effects of the pandemic have impacted their ability to attract and retain direct care workers and other employees. This staff is critically important to the safety and well-being of many of Connecticut's residents with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD), including my own family.

My daughter Meaghan Mulvaney is 27 years old. In the fall she lost her day program due to lack of employees at Abilis. Meaghan requires a one on one person due to her behaviors and fall risks. She fell in the program and required stitches to her eye area when her glasses broke. She loves being in the van with her peers, but she can get very excited and scream & jump in her seat upsetting other riders. This is the 3rd month Meaghan has been home without a program. She loves going out doing activities with her peers and learning in the various classes provided by Abilis.

I had to quit my job to be with her full time. This has impacted my family in many ways. My husband and myself are now retired, our biggest stress is what will happen to our child after we pass. Meaghan cannot be employed or live independently. The State of Connecticut is ignoring its most vulnerable population. The State has to put more money in the budget for these people. The wage of workers has to also increase to get a better population of people working with the disabled. Right now, excluding Abilis workers that I have been happy with, I have seen many people who can't find work anywhere else take jobs with the disabled.

I have personally experienced and heard about how workers basically abuse the disabled because they feel the disabled do not have a voice. In my daughter's case, even though she has a limited vocabulary she was able to tell me who hurt her. This individual was arrested and charged. It was something that never should have happened and because my daughter can not express herself. I'm left with wondering how she feels and my guilt of not protecting her.

Please stop underfunding Connecticut's direct support providers. Please get us qualified people who are interested in helping our children and having a meaningful career.

Please make Connecticut a state to be proud of not one we have to leave to protect our children.

Without your help, our state's community service delivery system will continue to shrink and our loved ones will bear the brunt of this loss. We are already experiencing the worst staffing crisis

that service providers have ever seen, which has resulted in an inability to resume programs paused during COVID and caused a rebound effect for family caregivers who are unable to return to work and contribute to Connecticut's economy.

Now more than ever, we need to ensure that critically necessary funding of \$150 million is included in this year's budget for the state's non-profit providers who care for our loved ones on a daily basis. We urge your support and ask that you add this funding to the budget before this committee. **My Child Matters=>8%**